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ABSTRACT

In 1990-91, the Austin Independent School District in Texas was awarded a 3-year Title VII grant to serve a population of "newcomers" (defined as students who had been in the United States for 1 year or less). The Newcomers Program was developed to serve the special needs of those students and to improve their English language proficiency and achievement skills. The program includes small classes, intensive English instruction, physical education classes, and content area classes, and the intent is for newcomers to transfer into regular English-as-a-Second-Language classes at the end of one school year. Compared to similar LEP students, the Title VII newcomers performed better on such measures of school success as attendance, grade point average, credits earned, and dropout rate. They also demonstrated an average gain of nine raw score points on the Language Assessment Battery pre- and posttests. The single most important opinion issue to emerge was the role of the teacher, whose effectiveness as measured by such criteria as commitment, cultural sensitivity, enthusiasm, and high motivation is considered key to the program. Students demonstrated a commitment to attending school and moving forward with their education. (LB)

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Title VII
Newcomers Program
in AISD

1990-91

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Austin Independent School District
Office of Research and Evaluation

FL 019 845

July, 1991

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Title VII Newcomers Program in AISD, 1990-91

Executive Summary

Austin Independent School District
Department of Management Information
Office of Research and Evaluation

Author: Marilyn Rumbaut

Program Description

In 1990-91, AISD was awarded a three-year Title VII grant to serve a population of limited-English-proficient (LEP) high school students termed "newcomers." For the purposes of the program, a newcomer is defined as a student who has been in the United States for one year or less. These students typically have limited or interrupted schooling in their home countries, and in some cases are functionally illiterate. Increasing numbers of immigrants are enrolling at three high school campuses, Austin, Lanier, and Reagan. To serve the special needs of the students at these three schools, AISD developed its Title VII Newcomers Program. All language backgrounds are eligible for the program, with Spanish being the primary language of most (72%) of the students. Those targeted for the program are newcomers to the United States in addition to being LEP.

The goal of the Title VII Newcomers program is to improve the English language proficiency and the achievement skills of the students described above. The program is designed to provide a sheltered environment for its participants. Class size is kept relatively small, and the students receive four hours of intensive English instruction daily which includes listening, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary. In addition, newcomers are enrolled in a physical education class and two hours of content area classes, or a combination of both. There is one teacher and one teacher aide at each campus. The intent is for newcomers to transfer into regular English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) classes at the end of one school year. If a newcomer entered the program late in the school year, however, and/or is unable to handle the transition, he/she may return for another semester at the discretion of the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) on that campus. During the 1990-91 school year, a total of 108 students was served by the Title VII Newcomers Program. The budget for the program was $140,000.

Major Findings

1. Compared to similar LEP students, the Title VII Newcomers performed better on measures of school success such as:

   · School attendance,
   · GPA,
   · Credits earned, and
   · Dropout rate. (Pages 14-16)

2. Title VII newcomers demonstrated an average gain of nine raw score points on the Language Assessment battery (LAB) pre- and posttests, which indicates that they are improving their abilities in English. (Page 9)

3. The single most important opinion issue to emerge from program staff was the role of the teacher, who is considered key to the success of the program. (Page 23)

4. Title VII newcomers are predominantly low income, overage for their grade, and dominant in their native language. Nonetheless, these students demonstrated a commitment to attending school and moving forward with their education. (Pages 6, 14-16)

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CONCLUSIONS

In the 1990-91 school year the Title VII Newcomers Program provided a wide range of services. Limited-English-proficient (LEP) students, their parents, and their teachers benefitted from Title VII funds. Despite the considerable obstacles of language and cultural adjustment, program students demonstrated their commitment to attending school and to moving forward with their education. The newcomers performed better on such measures of school success as attendance, grades, credits earned, and dropout rate than the comparison group. The opinion of the program staff was positive, and more strengths were articulated than weaknesses. For these reasons, the first year of the three-year Title VII Newcomers Program may be seen as impacting its students in a positive way.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

For many years, AISD has been awarded U.S. Department of Education Title VII funds to supplement the regular secondary bilingual and English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) programs. In the 1989-90 school year, as the District was completing a five-year grant cycle which helped to serve middle school and high school LEP students, it became apparent that increasing numbers of LEP students who were new arrivals to the U.S. had begun enrolling in District high schools. This was especially true at Austin, Lanier, and Reagan High Schools. It was clear that the standard offering of ESL classes supplementing the regular school curriculum would not be adequate to meet the needs of this growing population. The idea for the Newcomers Centers was developed to provide these targeted students with the additional assistance needed for them to acquire skills in the English language, become oriented to the U.S. culture, and begin as soon as possible to earn necessary credits and satisfy all requirements toward high school graduation.

EVALUATION OVERVIEW

The grant awarded AISD by the U.S. Department of Education specifies that there be an independent evaluation to determine the effectiveness of the Title VII Newcomers Program. This evaluation has focused on the following main questions:

- Did the Title VII Newcomers improve their English language acquisition as a result of the program?
- Did the Title VII Newcomers improve their academic achievement skills as a result of the program?
- Did the program effectively orient the newcomers to their new life in the U.S.?
- Has the presence of a teacher aide in the newcomers' classroom had a positive impact on the students?

Evaluation data were collected from a variety of sources:

- The Student Master File and the LEP file provided basic information about the newcomers such as home language, language dominance, and program entry and exit dates.
- Demographic and outcome information for program students were obtained by using ORE's generic evaluation system (GENESYS).
- Personal interviews were conducted with program staff to gather opinion information about the Title VII Newcomers Program. Similarly, student surveys were completed by program participants in an effort to get their opinions concerning the program. To highlight and personalize the information presented about the students served by this program, three students were profiled.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

In 1990-91, AISD was awarded a three-year Title VII grant to serve a population of limited English-proficient (LEP) high school students termed "newcomers." For the purposes of the program, a newcomer is defined as a student who has been in the United States for one year or less. These students typically have limited or interrupted schooling in their home countries, and in some cases are functionally illiterate. Increasing numbers of immigrants are enrolling at three high school campuses, Austin, Lanier, and Reagan. To serve the special needs of the students at these three schools, AISD developed its Title VII Newcomers Program. All language backgrounds are eligible for the program, with Spanish being the primary language of most (72%) of the students. Those targeted for the program are newcomers to the United States in addition to being LEP.

The goal of the Title VII Newcomers Program is to improve the English language proficiency and the achievement skills of the students described above. The program is designed to provide a sheltered environment for its participants. Class size is kept relatively small, and the students receive four hours of intensive English instruction daily which includes listening, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary. In addition, newcomers are enrolled in a physical education class and two hours of content area classes, or a combination of both. One teacher and one teacher aide are at each campus. The intent is for newcomers to transfer into the regular (ESL) classes at the end of one school year. If a newcomer entered the program late in the school year, however, and/or is unable to handle the transition, he/she may return for another semester at the discretion of the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) on that campus. A total of 108 students was served by the Title VII Newcomers Program during the 1990-91 school year.

1990-91 BUDGET

The total budget for the 1990-91 Title VII Newcomers Program was $140,000.

The budget for the Title VII Newcomers Program in this first (start-up) year of a three-year cycle was $140,000. These funds provided multilevel educational materials for the three Newcomer Centers at Austin, Lanier, and Reagan High Schools ($14,749). Six computers were purchased at $2,500 each. Funds were used for staff training ($840), services to parents ($2000), program evaluation ($12,931), and clerical support ($9,297). In addition, Title VII funds paid for the salaries of the three teacher aides ($73,874).

REASON	ALLOCATION
Teacher Aides (3)	$58,920
Clerk Typist/Clerical	7,600
Evaluation Associate (1/2)	10,750
FICA	5,911
Health Insurance	7,010
Teacher Retirement	5,911
Consumable/Nonconsumable Supplies and Materials	14,749
Equipment	15,000
Out of District Travel	1,000
Stipends (Staff Development)	840
College Tuition	7,200
Consultant	2,000
Indirect Costs (2.271%)	3,109
TOTAL	140,000

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Title VII Newcomers are predominantly low income, overage for their grade, and dominant or monolingual in their native language.

Most (72%) of the 108 students served by the Title VII Newcomers Program are Hispanic, and over one fourth (28%) are Vietnamese. Nearly all (93%) are from low-income families, and are either dominant (83%) or monolingual (16%) in their native language. The age range is from 13 to 20 years, but the vast majority (84%) of these students are from 15 to 18 years old. The majority (57%) are in the ninth grade, and most (74%) are considered overage for their grade (defined as one or more years older than the appropriate chronological age for their grade).* Over half (63%) of these students received eight to 10 years of education in their home countries and had been in the United States for up to six months (62%) before enrolling in the program.

* Being overage for grade is one of the key indicators of a student's being "at risk" of dropping out of school. Furthermore, the ninth grade is the grade at which a student is most likely to drop out, and Hispanics as a group drop out in the largest percentages.

Figure 1 shows the grade distribution of Title VII Newcomers.

FIGURE 1
GRADE LEVELS OF TITLE VII NEWCOMERS

Grade	# Students	% Students
9	62	57%
10	26	24%
11	20	19%
	108	100%

Figure 2 shows the ethnicity of Title VII Newcomers.

FIGURE 2
ETHNICITY/HOME LANGUAGE OF TITLE VII NEWCOMERS

78	Newcomers (72%)	are Hispanic
30	Newcomers (28%)	are Vietnamese
108	(100%)	

Figure 3 shows the LEP dominance of the Title VII Newcomers.

FIGURE 3
LEP DOMINANCE OF TITLE VII NEWCOMERS

Dominance	# Students	% Students
A/Monolingual	17	16%
B/Dominant	90	83%
C/Bilingual	1	1%
	108	100%

Figure 4 shows countries of origin of the Title VII newcomers.

FIGURE 4
COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN OF
TITLE VII NEWCOMERS

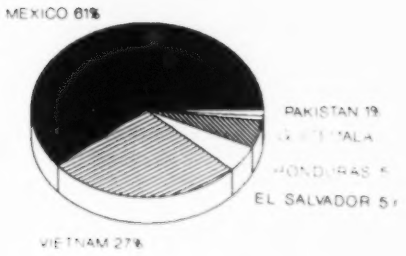


Figure 5 shows the number and percent of newcomers from rural and urban areas.

FIGURE 5
TITLE VII NEWCOMERS
RURAL/URBAN AREA

Area	# Students	% Students
Urban	77	73%
Rural	28	27%
	105*	100%

***Information is missing for three students because of early withdrawal or late entry into the program.**

PROFILES OF THREE TITLE VII NEWCOMERS PROGRAM STUDENTS

The following brief profiles of three of the 1990-91 Title VII newcomers are included here in an effort to highlight and personalize the information presented about program participants. The students' true names are not used.

Teresa is 17 years old and in the 11th grade. She is dominant in Spanish and went to school in rural Mexico for nine years. She had been in the United States for about one year and had attended another AISD high school before she entered the Newcomers Program at Reagan in the fall of 1990. She was in the program for the entire school year. Her English improved over that time, but not at such a fast rate as the previous year when she was just beginning to learn English.

Han was monolingual in his native tongue, Vietnamese. He had been in the U.S. for only two months before he enrolled in Lanier High's Newcomers Program as an 11th grader. He is 19 years old. Han's English language acquisition seems to have been more dramatic in reading than in oral expression. Han successfully completed the school year.

Fifteen-year-old Eduardo comes from an urban area in El Salvador. His education in Central America was for only four years. He completed the 1990-91 school year in the ninth grade at Austin High, five months after arriving in the U.S. His performance on the District achievement test indicated a good comprehension of written English.

SERVICES

SERVICES PROVIDED TO TEACHERS

Title VII funds provided orientation sessions and teacher workshops for the three program teachers and three teacher aides.

The teachers and teacher aides were provided two orientation sessions during the fall, 1990 semester and four workshops during the spring, 1991 semester. All program teachers and aides attended each of these training sessions. Their evaluation comments clearly indicate that they considered the training to be valuable and relevant. Especially helpful to the teachers and aides was the hands-on computer training.

SERVICES PROVIDED TO PARENTS

Parents of Title VII newcomers were provided with a variety of activities designed to orient them to the school district's expectations of their children, and to offer them relevant information and a support system.

There were several kinds of outreach made to parents of the Title VII newcomers, and these were met with a good response. There were two orientation meetings in the fall and two parent workshops in the spring (one with a Vietnamese speaker). The attendance for these ranged from 9-16 parents. There were four talks in a series presented by a bilingual psychologist/lecturer which were well attended and received, based on participant comments. The topics were related to culture shock, preserving and protecting the family, education, and community resources. In addition, the Districtwide Parent Advisory Council was active throughout the school year, developing a support system for the parents.

AIDE EDUCATION

Stipend money in the amount of $900 was available in the Title VII budget this year to be used by teacher aides for college coursework. None of the three aides had used stipend money by the end of the spring semester, but two had expressed an interest in making use of the opportunity during the summer.

OUTCOMES

ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

1990-91 Student Performance on the LAB

Title VII newcomers demonstrated an average gain of nine raw score points on the Language Assessment Battery, indicating that these students are improving their abilities in English.

The Language Assessment Battery (LAB) is a language proficiency test used to evaluate English oral language acquisition. The LAB has been used to evaluate the English language skills of LEP students in AISD for many years. The maximum raw score on the LAB is 92. All newcomers were given a pretest in either the spring, 1990, or fall, 1990, semester. The students were then administered a posttest in spring, 1991. Pretest and posttest scores were compared to determine if the students, on the average, had improved their performance. Improved performance would indicate increased proficiency in the English language.

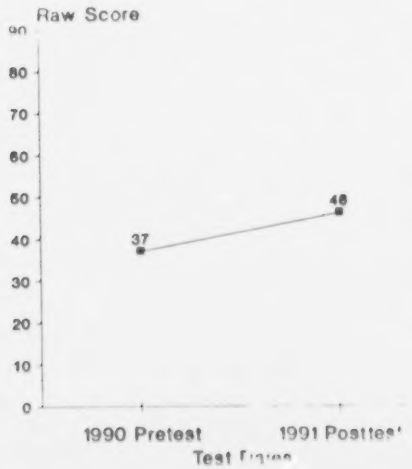
There were 65 students in all from the three campuses who had been both pre- and posttested with the LAB on the dates described. The average score for the pretest was 37, and it was 46 for the posttest (see Figure 6). This shows an average gain by these students of nine raw score points, indicating that the students are learning more English. Whether this gain represents a good, or typical, gain for these students is unclear. In previous years, Title VII LEP students have shown similar gains. However, because the length of time between pre- and posttest for the 1990-91 Title VII students varied (see note to Figure 6), the pre- to posttest time periods for this year's and previous years' Title VII students may not be comparable. Nonetheless, the performance of previous years' students at least gives some context by which to gauge the gain of this year's students.

This is not to suggest that these students are proficient yet in English. In 1976, the New York City Public Schools, in which the LAB was normed, used the 20th percentile rank, which corresponds to a raw score in the mid-70's, as the cutoff for what they term "effectiveness" in English. Although this is an arbitrary cutoff point, it can be of use in giving meaning to the Title VII newcomers' 1990-91 average posttest score of 46. For these students to score 70+ on the LAB, they would need to answer approximately 50% more of the test items correctly.

NOTE: For purposes of discussion, the Title VII newcomers will be compared to a "comparison group" consisting of nonprogram participants who are students at all AISD high schools, and whose language dominance is A or B, dominant or monolingual in their native language. The students comprising this comparison group number from 289-311 depending on the particular measure being compared. This is not considered a true comparison group, however. For the most part, the comparison group students are **not** new arrivals to the U.S.

Figure 6 shows the performance on LAB of the Title VII newcomers.

FIGURE 6
TITLE VII NEWCOMERS
1990-91 AVERAGE LAB SCORE GAINS



NOTE: Students were pretested either in spring, 1990 or fall, 1990. The number of months between pretest and posttest therefore varied across students. Individual gains are not being compared, however, only the group average.

"Vengo a aprender ingles. No vengo a perder tiempo nada mas."
"I come to learn English. I don't come to waste time any more."

ACHIEVEMENT

TAAS

Both the Title VII newcomers and other similar LEP students performed below District averages on the TAAS. Compared to similar LEP students, more Title VII newcomers mastered the Mathematics test at the Exit Level.

The Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) is the State-mandated, criterion-referenced testing program which is administered to students in grades 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11 (Exit Level). The Exit-Level tests must be mastered as part of graduation requirements and are offered two times a year. LEP students may be given a one-time-only LEP exemption.

Ninth-Grade TAAS

There were 38 newcomers who were eligible to take the ninth-grade TAAS in October of 1990. Of those, 31 (82%) took the one-time-only LEP exemption. Five students (13%) took the tests but mastered none of the subject areas. One student was absent, and another's answer sheet was coded "Other," which indicates that for some reason the student was unable to complete the tests.

Eleventh-Grade TAAS

There were 15 newcomers eligible to take the Exit-Level TAAS in October, 1990. Of those, 14 were tested, and one was absent. Of the 14 students tested, 12 took the Exit-Level tests twice (in October and again in April). Following testing, 10 newcomers (71%) had mastered mathematics, 3 (21%) had mastered reading, and 2 (14%) had mastered writing.

NOTE: The TAAS performance of the newcomers shown below is based on a small number of students tested (N=14). In addition, these students had the opportunity to be tested twice, in October, 1990 and again in April, 1991.

Figure 7 shows the performance of the eleventh-grade program participants who took the TAAS in 1990-91.

FIGURE 7
AISD ELEVENTH-GRADE/EXIT-LEVEL TAAS, OCTOBER, 1990

	% Mastery Writing	% Mastery Reading	% Mastery Mathematics
All Students*	84	91	77
ESL Students	27	30	38
Title VII Newcomers	14	21	71

* Nonspecial education

TAP

The performance of the Title VII newcomers on the TAP is well below that of the District and generally below that of the comparison group. However, out of 15 comparisons of their performance with that of the other LEP students, there were two comparisons in which the newcomers' mean grade equivalents were higher than those of the comparison group.

AISD administers a norm-referenced test to all students who are considered capable of attaining a valid score. Each spring, at the secondary level, the Tests of Achievement and Proficiency (TAP) are administered at grades 9-12.

Figure 8 shows the performance of the Title VII newcomers who were administered the TAP in spring, 1991, as well as the performances of the comparison group and all AISD students.

FIGURE 8
1990-91 TAP MEAN GRADE EQUIVALENT SCORES

	TITLE VII NEWCOMERS		COMPARISON STUDENTS		ALL AISD STUDENTS	
	N	GE	N	GE	N	GE
READING						
9	50	4.6	103	5.4	3770	10.0
10	23	4.9	73	6.3	3036	12.3
11	19	5.6	48	6.7	2516	13.4
12	0	NA	30	8.0	2252	13.3
MATHEMATICS						
9	51	6.7	103	7.2	3800	9.8
10	23	7.5	74	7.7	3042	12.5
11	19	9.5	49	9.4	2523	13.4
12	0	NA	30	10.3	2265	13.4
LANGUAGE						
9	52	4.8	102	5.6	3801	10.5
10	23	4.5	74	6.3	3048	12.4
11	19	6.6	49	6.2	2527	12.9
12	0	NA	30	9.5	2267	12.8
SOCIAL STUDIES						
9	52	6.2	104	7.1	3768	10.1
10	22	6.9	75	7.6	3042	11.7
11	18	7.3	51	7.9	2522	13.2
12	0	NA	29	9.3	2239	12.8
SCIENCE						
9	52	5.8	104	6.9	3779	10.7
10	22	6.6	75	7.9	3050	12.9
11	18	7.7	51	8.9	2517	13.5
12	0	NA	29	9.8	2232	13.3

OTHER MEASURES OF SCHOOL SUCCESS

One way to evaluate whether students in the District are succeeding in their education is to look at indices like attendance, dropout rate, grade point average, etc. The Office of Research and Evaluation has designed a special set of computer programs called the Generic Evaluation System (GENESYS) to gather outcome information on programs of interest. These programs were used for most of the following analyses.

Graduation Rate

Because there were no 12th-grade Title VII newcomers in 1990-91, the graduation rate will not be discussed. However, this will be an important indicator of school success to monitor in the next two years of the project.

Dropouts

> "...I took a decision I never come back to the school and when the (Newcomers Program) began, I come back...I felt better and I learn a lot."

At the high school level, the Title VII newcomers' dropout rate is lower than that of the comparison group.

The problem of school dropouts is a tremendous concern nationwide. So far, it appears that the support system the Title VII Newcomers Program is providing to these targeted LEP students is helping to keep them in school.

Figure 9 shows dropout rates (through the fifth 6-week period of the 1990-91 school year) and percent overage for Title VII newcomers and other similar LEP high school students.

FIGURE 9
DROPOUT RATES/PERCENT OVERAGE
TITLE VII NEWCOMERS

GROUP	N	DROPOUT RATE	% OVERAGE
Title VII Newcomers	108	1.9%	74%
Comparison Group	311	3.9%	67%

Credits Earned

Title VII newcomers earned credits at higher rates than other similar LEP students.

High school students must earn 2.5 to 3.0 credits per semester in order to graduate. Some students earn no grade for a course because of incompletes or unexcused absences; these credits are sometimes credited to them later.

LEP A and B students at AISD high schools who were not in the Title VII Newcomers Program earned an average of 2.3 credits in the fall, 1990. In the spring semester, 1991, the average was 1.9.

These rates for the newcomers are higher than those of other similar LEP students in the District.

Figure 10 shows a comparison of these groups and their credits earned.

FIGURE 10
1990-91 CREDITS EARNED
TITLE VII NEWCOMERS

GROUP	FALL 1990 N	FALL 1990 CREDITS EARNED	SPRING 1991 N	SPRING 1991 CREDITS EARNED
Title VII Newcomers	86	2.5	103	2.2
Comparison Group	289	2.3	291	1.9

Grade Point Average

Title VII newcomers made higher grades than similar LEP students at the high school level.

Grades are assigned on a 100-point scale with 70 being the cutoff for passing. The average of all grades received is the student's grade point average (GPA). Title VII newcomers had higher GPA's during the fall and spring semesters. Their grades were in the B range (80-90). The grades of similar LEP students were lower than those of the Title VII newcomers. The actual GPA's are shown in Figure 11.

FIGURE 11
1990-91 GPA
TITLE VII NEWCOMERS

GROUP	FALL 1990 N	FALL 1990 GPA	SPRING 1991 N	SPRING 1991 GPA
Title VII Newcomers	86	82.7	103	80.2
Comparison Group	289	78.5	286	76.5

Attendance

Title VII newcomers have higher attendance rates on the average than that of similar LEP students in the District.

Attendance rates were examined to see if Title VII newcomers were present for more classes than similar LEP students in the District. Newcomers attended classes at a higher rate than similar LEP students and their attendance rate was higher than the overall District rate at the high school level.

Figure 12 shows attendance rates for Title VII newcomers, and compares it to that of similar LEP students and that of District high school students as a whole.

FIGURE 12
1990-91 ATTENDANCE RATES
TITLE VII NEWCOMERS

Group	FALL 1990 N	FALL 1990 Attendance %	SPRING 1991 N	SPRING 1991 Attendance %
Title VII Newcomers	91	95.4%	106	92.4%
Comparison Group	290	92.8%	311	89.9%

"Now I want to graduate...not just finish 10th grade."

"I never thought to go to college and now I do."

(before the program), "I felt bad I don't have friends and the teacher doesn't understand me."

ORIENTATION TO THE UNITED STATES

The Title VII newcomers were provided with a variety of activities designed to expose them to and familiarize them with the culture of the United States. These included classroom activities, reading selections, field trips, etc.

Recognizing that a potential problem for many such students is a values conflict arising from the considerable adjustment/culture shock with which they are faced, the program staff is looking into the possibility of providing in-school support groups for the newcomers for the 1991-92 school year.

EFFECTIVENESS OF AIDES

The role and effectiveness of the teacher aide in the classroom is an issue that has been of some interest in recent years. In 1975, AISD reported its finding that the presence of teacher aides in the classroom did not lead to improvement in achievement, and in fact had a negative effect on achievement (ORE Pub. No. 75.47).

Of what can be examined thus far of the Title VII Newcomers Program, there is little that can be said about the impact of the presence of teacher aides in program classrooms on the program participants. Staff opinion about aides was mixed (see "Summary of Staff Survey"). As the program continues into its second and third years, the effectiveness of aides will remain an important evaluation question.

COSTS

Students in this program received varying amounts of service; e.g., one student withdrew from the program in October, 1990, four other students withdrew after about one semester, three transferred to regular ESL classes, 11 more were "mainstreamed" after the fall semester, and still others enrolled at various times throughout the school year, one as late as April, 1991. In total, the Title VII Newcomers Program served 108 students in 1990-91. The cost per student for the 1990-91 Title VII Newcomers Program was $1296. Based on student entry and exit dates there were 85,830 contact hours during the school year. Dividing the budget ($140,000) by the total number of contact hours results in a cost per contact hour of $1.63.

"Quiciera tomar clases de verano, pero no puedo por falta de dinero."
"I'd like to take summer classes, but I can't because of lack of money."

STRENGTHS/ WEAKNESSES

SUMMARY OF STUDENT SURVEY

The Title VII newcomers expressed a positive opinion of the program, viewing it as very beneficial in fostering English language acquisition and in providing a support system of teachers and friends.

In April, 1991, the students in the Newcomers Program were administered an anonymous, open-ended questionnaire to be completed as a class project. They were assisted by the teacher in understanding the questions and were encouraged to voice their individual personal opinions. One classroom's Hispanic students completed the survey first in English and then again in Spanish to encourage self-expression.

Most Helpful/Least Helpful Program Components

The students' opinion of the program was overwhelmingly positive. The teacher and the aide were frequently cited as the most helpful parts of the program, as well as the computers, with which many students requested more time. Additionally, all activities related to English language acquisition (reading, writing, speaking, listening, gaining vocabulary) were considered to be extremely helpful. Often mentioned by the students as the least helpful parts of the program were disruptions in the classroom and working in groups. Reading and writing were seen by some as less helpful than conversational practice.

Feeling Welcome/Gaining Confidence to Stay in School

Almost all (96%) of the newcomers reported feeling welcome in their schools, and many offered the opinion that having friends and the support of the teachers were the key reasons. Correspondingly, the same percentage of students (96%) said that they felt more confident about staying in school as a result of being in the program; a few added that they are now committed to graduating and have hopes of attending college.

Helpfulness of the Aide in the Classroom

Concerning the helpfulness of the aide in the classroom, 75% of those who commented expressed a positive opinion, and 25% of those who commented expressed a negative one.

Self-Rating of Reading and Speaking Abilities in English

The students were asked to rate their abilities to read and speak English before the program and now. The students rated their skills on a scale ranging from "very well" to "well," then to "fairly well," "poorly," and "not at all."

Most students (70%) assessed their own reading skills in English as having progressed from "not at all" or "poorly" to "fairly well" or "well," and 76% rated their English speaking abilities as having improved from "not at all" or "poorly" to "fairly well" or "well."

In summary, the students viewed the Newcomers Program as being of significant value to them in their adjustment to student life (and life in general) in the United States. Activities fostering English language acquisition were considered to be extremely beneficial, as was the developing support system of teachers and friends. The students' self-rating revealed that most see themselves as having made good progress in their ability to read and speak English, and a dramatic percentage of these students expressed increased confidence in regards to attending and staying in school.

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO SPRING, 1991 EMPLOYEE SURVEY

There were five items related to the Title VII Newcomers Program on the spring, 1991 employee survey. Almost all who responded had positive comments.

Below are comments summarizing these responses.

- Teachers indicated that they **were** currently incorporating Cooperative Learning techniques into their teaching; (50% said "often," and 50% said "sometimes").

- Teachers indicated that they have sufficient instructional materials in English and Spanish to address the range of reading levels in their LEP students.

- Teachers and administrators responded that they have had more parent involvement and that students have been more responsive as a result of Title VII parent workshops.

- Teachers indicated that they would benefit from training sessions in communication techniques designed to involve parents of ESL students

- When asked to what degree they thought the Title VII Newcomers Program is meeting the needs of students, the teacher who responded said "well," the other professional said "very well," and the administrators' responses were divided with one responding "not at all," and the others saying "well," or "very well."

SUMMARY OF STAFF SURVEY

The project staff viewed this first year of the Title VII Newcomers Program as a good start. By the second semester, problems had been recognized and problem-solving strategies were being formulated. The most important issue to emerge from the staff interviews was the role of the teacher, who is considered to be key to the success of the program.

Campus staff and administrators were interviewed with several open-ended questions intended to elicit their opinions, experiences, and ideas concerning the first year of the Title VII Newcomers Program. Interviews were conducted with the Project Director, the bilingual coordinator and the secondary coordinator assigned to the project, the Parental Involvement Specialist, and the principals, teachers, and aides at each of the three project campuses. The following is a composite of their responses.

The staff's general opinion of the program was overwhelmingly positive. They thought of the Newcomers Program as worthwhile and very much needed. The program was considered to be a critical support system for the students, increasing their chances of success.

Specific things which were seen as having worked well during this first year included:

* Orientation to U.S. culture and the culture of classmates;
* Good materials (despite their late arrival);
* Having a teacher aide in the classroom to support the teacher;
* Acceptance and support from other school staff;
* Field trips/speakers/use of community resources (on one campus);
* Peer help/tutoring, socialization, and sense of identity;
* Parental involvement; and
* Problem solving and sharing ideas between campuses.

On the other hand, things mentioned by staff as not having worked well included:

* Start up disorganized/resulting confusion;
* Materials/orientation late, one teacher and one aide hired late;
* Problem with/selection process, inappropriate placement at first;
* Lack of team approach (teacher/aide) on some campuses;
* Aides underutilized and role not clearly defined;
* Some problems with classroom control and cheating;
* Native language at times overutilized;
* Computers underutilized;
* Too few field trips;
* Not enough of "Cooperative Learning" approach; and
* Uneven system of receiving/interpreting credits from other countries.

Many suggestions for improvement were offered by staff, such as:

* Better communication between teacher and aide,
* Improved selection process/assessment of student background information,
* Curriculum development,
* Inservice training for content area teachers,
* In-school group counseling for cultural adjustment issues,
* Peer "buddy system,"
* Improved use of materials/aide,
* Better transitioning/follow up and coordination, and
* More parental involvement (with more commitment from campuses).

Clearly, the single most important issue to emerge from the staff interviews was the role of the teacher, who is considered key to the success of the program. The effective Newcomers Program teacher was described as being:

* Committed to the students,
* Able to work well with an aide,
* Culturally sensitive,
* Motivated and able to motivate,
* Enthusiastic,
* Innovative, and
* Able to find and utilize community resources well.

To summarize, the first year of the Newcomers Program was viewed by project staff as a good start. Although the beginning of the school year was rough, most things were up and running by mid-semester. By the second semester, most of the problems had been resolved, or were recognized as areas needing improvement, with problem-solving strategies emerging to address them.

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